

# PERSONNEL INSIGHTS

HQ AFPC/DPCTI, 550 C Street West, Suite 57, Randolph AFB TX 78150-4759  
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## *Comments from Our Technical Director*

In the enclosed e-mail Maj Gen Speigel announced major (3,560 positions) Air Force wide civilian reductions in FY04. Most of these positions must be off the rolls by the end of FY03 to achieve projected savings. As Maj Gen Speigel also states, if you believe Reduction in Force (RIF) procedures will be needed to accomplish these reductions, you need to contact the AFPC RIF Unit as soon as possible to begin working the problem--it is not too early to do that now.

It's critical that the CPFs contact us as soon as they know they will need a RIF processed and that we receive the complete RIF request package a minimum of 120 days prior to the RIF effective date for RIFs requiring 60 day notices. If you have a negotiated agreement that requires a longer notification period, you must submit them earlier. For example:

- RIF request packages for RIFs effective 30 Sep 03 that need 60 day notices must be received NLT 30 May 03
- RIF request packages for RIFs effective 30 Sep 03 that need 90 day notices must be received NLT 02 May 03
- RIF request packages for RIFs effective 30 Sep 03 that need 120 day notices must be received NLT 03 Apr 03

My POC for questions related to RIF is at DSN 665-3045, extension 4105, (FAX) DSN 665-3181.

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**The following is a reprint of an AF/DPP e-mail sent to all MAJCOM DP's on 26 Nov 02**

Team,

Recently, your XPMs were provided with the projected numbers for the military and civilian reductions that will occur beginning in FY04. If you have not seen these, contact your XPMs immediately and ask them to share them with you. These reductions include an AF-wide civilian reduction of 3560 in FY04, most of which must be off the books in FY03 to achieve projected savings.

While we recognize that the numbers are not final, we also realize that once they are finalized we will have very little time to begin taking action to remove positions. Therefore, it is critical that we begin planning and implementing procedures to reduce the impact of any reductions. Additional information is provided below:

Background on the reductions - Civilian manpower has been reduced over the past few years for a variety of reasons. Reductions were driven by actions such as increasing competitive sourcing and privatization, reducing management headquarters, civilian over execution, new MEOs, a need to reshape the workforce, and increases in reduction support. Several possible strategies for implementing the reductions were developed and presented at the fall CORONA. A decision briefing to AF/CC will occur around 18 Dec 02 to identify the reduction strategy that provides maximum support to the war fighters. Once the appropriate methodology is selected, the final reduction numbers will be released.

Preparing for the reductions - When the corporate structure agreed on the civilian reductions, civilian spaces and civ pay dollars were removed from the Air Force FYDP, but reductions were not directed to the MAJCOMs. As a result, the spaces and funding in the Air Force FYDP do not match what the MAJCOMs show on their UMDs. At CORONA Fall, senior leadership agreed now is the time to bring the books back into balance to reflect the true state of civilian and military authorizations.

DPCs should already be reviewing the impacts the reductions may have on your civilian workforce. While we do not have the final decision on the methodology, your XPMs have the ballpark figures or ranges for your reduction numbers. This should be sufficient to determine the impact of the reductions and what tools you may need to meet the reduction goals.

#### Reduction strategies

- Reductions must be taken in FY03, as there are no funds available for the positions in FY04. In certain cases, you may be able to spread some of the reductions to FY04, so work with your XPMs
- Scrub your vacancies carefully
- Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP). Central funding for VSIPs is available, as long as you over execute
- Workforce Shaping VSIPs can be used to lessen the impact

Unfortunately, DoD did not allow the use of "daisy chains" this year. Also, there is no central funding for the Workforce Shaping VSIPs.

- Voluntary Early Retirement Authority should be requested

- Reduction in Force (RIF). If you are serviced by AFPC/DPC and it appears that RIFs may be necessary, ensure you contact your servicing team and the RIF team as soon as possible to begin working the problem

The reductions may have an unintended consequence if we are not mindful of them now. There are nearly 300 PALACE Acquire interns and Copper Caps that are graduating during FY03. Please ensure that during the planning of your reduction strategy that these are taken into account and that every effort is made to place them as soon as they graduate from the program. Failure to do so will lead to an increased cost in the program, a reduction in the number of new interns recruited for future years, under execution of the bonus and training dollars that could lead to a death spiral in these areas. We have worked very hard for the last few years to reinvigorate and fund the PAQ and Copper Cap programs. It is incumbent upon all of us to do everything possible to retain this effort to revitalize our workforce.

We stand ready to provide any support your needs. Contact AF/DPPH (DSN 227-1181) for assistance on the reductions and the strategies to lessen its impact.

JOHN M. SPEIGEL, Maj Gen, USAF  
Director, Personnel Policy



## Did You Know?

The following are things about RIF that not everyone knows. Some are options that management at local installations has the right to decide; others have already been decided by Air Force.

### **(a) USE OF VACANCIES**

Within the Air Force all vacant positions will be used when determining RIF assignment rights. For RIF placement purposes, a vacancy is any established, authorized, funded position at the installation that is available to be filled; that is, one which does not have a formal hiring restriction (necessitated by funding limits, manpower reductions, etc.).

Air Force also offers vacancies in lieu of separation. This would apply to vacancies which remain unfilled after the RIF and which did not meet the definition of "available position" when determining assignment rights (i.e., an offer of a part-time position to a full time employee or offer a position below the three grade bump/retreat limit, offer of a temporary position).

### **(b) FULLY QUALIFIED IN RIF**

To be qualified for assignment to an available position in RIF, including a vacancy, an employee must meet more than just basic eligibility. He must be Fully Qualified as defined by 5 CFR 351.702. This criterion normally goes beyond the qualifications we require for merit promotion consideration. As a result employees may not qualify for RIF assignment even though they were referred on a certificate for consideration to that position, or the same series at a higher grade.

An employee is fully qualified for assignment in RIF if they:

1. Meet OPM established standards and requirements for the position, including any minimum educational requirements, and any selective placement factors.
2. Are physically qualified, with reasonable accommodation where appropriate, to perform the duties of the position.
3. Meet any OPM approved special qualifying conditions for the position
4. Clearly demonstrate based on overall background, including recency of experience, the capability, adaptability, and special skills needed to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position without ***undue interruption*** to the organization.

#### **(c) WAIVING QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR VACANCIES**

Waiving qualification requirements during a RIF applies only to the “formal” RIF process (when the employee has been released from his or her competitive level). When both the Civilian Personnel Flight (CPF) and the appropriate management official agree, qualifications may be waived for assignment to a vacancy. Waiving qualification requirements, if exercised, should be done with caution. Qualifications should only be waived when there is strong evidence that the individual can perform the duties of the position but lacks all of the qualification requirements. Positive education requirements cannot be waived.

#### **(d) MODIFICATION OF QUALIFICATIONS**

In offering positions that are not a RIF assignment right (either in lieu of RIF separation or Pre RIF) you cannot “waive” qualifications but the Qualifications Standards Handbook allows the “modification” of standards. When both the CPF and the appropriate management official agree, qualifications may be “modified” for assignment to a vacancy. Modification of Qualifications should be done with caution. Qualifications should only be waived when there is strong evidence that the individual can perform the duties of the position but lacks all of the qualification requirements.

#### **(e) TIE-BREAKING PROCEDURES**

Local installations need to establish tie-breaking procedures in the event two employees have identical retention standing. Most activities use the tie-breaking procedure (random based upon Social Security number) that is already programmed into AutoRIF.

Installations that do not elect to use AutoRIF's tiebreaker must decide, and document, how ties will be broken. Remember this is an area that is negotiable with your local union.

#### **(f) ASSIGNMENT RIGHTS FOR TENURE GROUP III EMPLOYEES**

Term employees are competing employees in RIF (5 CFR 351.203) and are either separated or placed under RIF procedures if their positions are abolished prior to their appointment NTE date.

Within the Air Force, after release from their competitive level, tenure group III employees in the competitive service are considered for vacancies in lieu of RIF separations. This includes permanent vacancies if they are still available after all tenure group I and II have been considered. Since these are offers in lieu of separation the grade limits for assignment rights do not apply.

The Air Force does not provide tenure group III employees bumping rights in the second round RIF competition. There is also no authority (under OPM rules) for an agency to provide its group III employees with retreat rights.

#### **(g) ASSIGNMENT RIGHTS FOR EXCEPTED SERVICE EMPLOYEES**

There is no OPM or Air Force policy that provides excepted service employees any second round RIF competition consideration. All excepted service employees, regardless of tenure group, are subject to separation after release from their competitive level unless the installation or major command may establish a policy to provide for assignment

rights in round two. At its option, the installation or command may provide its excepted service employees with both bumping and retreating rights.

Most installations do not offer bump and retreat rights to their released excepted service employees.

#### **(h) TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES**

A competitive service temporary employee (tenure group "0") released from a competitive level in RIF does not have any assignment rights. Not even to another position in a different competitive level held by a temporary employee.

Temporary employees must be released before a competitive employee (tenure group I, II, or III) is released from the same competitive level. This does not mean that all temporary employees in all competitive levels must be terminated.

Management has the option as to whether they will retain or release temporary employees in those competitive levels not impacted while the agency is undergoing a RIF.

#### **(i) TEMPORARY POSITIONS**

Although a temporary position is not considered to be an "available" position for RIF assignment, you can make the offer of a vacant temporary position that will last at least 3 months if a competing employee has no other assignment rights and will otherwise be separated.

If used, as a RIF offer of assignment, the position must be within the employee's three-grade or grade interval range.

When an employee accepts a temporary position as a RIF offer of assignment, the employee retains the same status and tenure.

Temporary position vacancies below the three grades or grade interval range may only be offered in lieu of RIF separation. Employees can only be offered these positions by conversion (or reemployment). In these placements the employee must be converted to a tenure group "0" with a NTE date.

#### **(j) REEMPLOYED ANNUITANTS**

Reemployed annuitants serve at the will of the appointing officer (i.e., commander) and may be terminated at any time. At management's discretion, the reemployed annuitant may compete in the RIF or may be separated prior to the RIF.

Most installations terminate them rather than providing reemployed annuitants with RIF retention rights.

#### **(k) EXCEPTIONS TO THE REGULAR ORDER OF RELEASE**

A released employee has the right to use annual leave in order to remain on the agency's rolls past the effective date of the RIF in order to obtain first eligibility for retirement, and/or to gain eligibility to carry health benefits into retirement.

An employee in a relocation situation (e.g., transfer of function, reassignment, realignment, change of duty station, etc.) has the same right to use annual leave past the effective date of separation by adverse action in order to obtain first eligibility for retirement, and/or to gain eligibility to carry health benefits into retirement.

#### **(m) EMPLOYEES ON WORKMAN COMPENSATION IN RIF**

An injured employee who is on Leave Without Pay (LWOP) because of a compensable injury enjoys no special protection in a RIF. If the employee is separated by RIF procedures while on LWOP, the individual has no restoration rights.

You may not deny a RIF assignment right to an employee who is reached for release from a competitive level during a leave of absence (LWOP) that resulted from a compensable injury solely because the employee is physically disqualified as a result of the compensable injury. The employee must be treated as if the injury had not occurred.

#### **(n) RIF NOTICES**

An employee impacted by RIF is given at least 60-calendar days specific advance notice of the action that is proposed. There is **no longer** any regulatory requirement to give 120 days notice for a significant RIF (one that involves 50 or more separations), however many union contracts require a notice period longer than 60 days. There is no maximum timeframe for notice periods.

The notice period begins the **day after** the employee receives the RIF notice. The day the employee receives the notice, or the effective date of the RIF action, does not count in the computation of the minimum (60 days) notice period.

You also cannot count a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday as the last day of the minimum notice period.

#### **(o) PLACEMENT ON POSITIONS WITH HIGHER GROWTH POTENTIAL**

You may assign an employee under formal RIF procedures (i.e., the employee is released from a competitive level) to a position with higher promotion potential. If this occurs (in formal RIF) after assignment the employee may be non-competitively promoted to the full performance level of the position. There is also no need to clear the Priority Placement Program (PPP) stopper list to process this promotion action since it is a career promotion.

In the Air Force, employees will not be assigned to a position with higher promotion potential when another affected employee with higher retention standing is eligible for assignment to the position at the target level.

A placement action outside of a formal RIF assignment right (e.g., Pre-RIF, or in lieu of RIF separation), or through modification of qualifications, to a position with greater growth potential must be made competitively in accordance with internal merit promotion procedures.



## **Auto RIF (Automated Reduction-in-Force)**

Automated Reduction-in-Force (AutoRIF) is an automated RIF processing application, which uses data from the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) to process RIF actions. The application is designed to simplify RIF processing, document RIF actions, and minimize data entry. It can handle multiple iterations of the RIF to make adjustments, automates the search for placement options, and provides equal employment opportunity statistics and reports, and other standard reports. It generates automated RIF notices to employees, and keeps an electronic record of all actions in any stage of RIF. Several features are available which allow as much flexibility as possible.

#### **PROCESS**

RIF is not a static process. RIF actions are dependent on other RIF actions, and all are dependent on employee and position data. A change in a single data element for one employee can have a multiplying effect that changes RIF

actions for several employees. Processing a RIF can be very chaotic if a good tracking system is not available. AutoRIF assists in keeping track of employees, actions, and other RIF-related data.

## DATA

AutoRIF uses employee and position data download from the DCPDS at the beginning of the RIF process. The staffer can update changes to this "snapshot" of data that occur during the RIF manually in AutoRIF.

## REPORTS

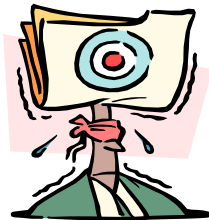
AutoRIF will produce several standard reports: Retention Registers, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) reports, tenure listing, action report listing, individual worksheet for impacted candidates, etc. AutoRIF data files contain all the necessary data for producing RIF notices.

## ADVANTAGES

Using AutoRIF instead of manually processing a RIF has the following advantages:

- Fewer people are necessary for processing RIF actions
- A RIF placement can be found and recorded in a fraction of the time
- Changes to the database can be entered and RIF actions updated much more quickly
- Placement accuracy is greatly improved
- Documentation of RIF actions is automatic

The version of the software currently being used on stand-alone personnel computers is AutoRIF 3.3, which is operated in a Windows environment. (Minimum System Requirements \*Operating System: Windows 95/98/ or NT \*Processor: 486/66 \*Memory: 32 Mb \*Hard Drive Space: 20 Mb free). AutoRIF is available for downloading at [http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/Staffing/rif\\_corner.htm](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/Staffing/rif_corner.htm).



## Why RIF When You Can Reassign

Reprint from previous Personnel Insights dated 31 May 02.

Since establishment of the RIF (RIF) Unit in late 1999, we have received 294 RIF requests to process. Of these 99 (33.6%) involved three or less employees. In 23 of these RIFs (25%) the resulting placement for one or more of the impacted employees was a vacancy provided in the RIF request package.

Although RIF procedures may have to be used to place small numbers of surplus employees it is not the only option available. In many of the cases mentioned above the RIF could have been either minimized or avoided if the CPF had

management reassigned the surplus employees into existing vacancies in accordance with their priority consideration under rule "C" Table 8.1. of AFMAN 36-203. This priority entitles a surplus employee facing RIF with mandatory placement on any vacant position at the same grade for which they qualify.

RIF is probably the most time-consuming and labor extensive option for both AFPC and the CPF when dealing with small numbers of surplus employees. It takes the RIF Unit 120 days to accomplish a RIF. It also adds to the CPFs workload in preparation of the RIF Request, announcing and processing VERA/VSIP applications, registering candidates in Priority Placement Program (PPP), counseling employees, and other Pre and Post RIF tasks.

The RIF process also is very disruptive and expense to a base. You affect not only the impacted employees but also their organization, and other employees in the competitive area. As well as adding to the payroll cost of the activity.

- Employees who are demoted usually keep their higher grades for two years (grade retention) and/or salary indefinitely (pay retention)
- Employees who are reassigned and displace someone are normally those with greater seniority and higher pay rates (step in grade) than those displaced
- Employees who are separated usually have entitlements to severance pay equal to as much as one year's salary

**There are additional one-time costs as well...**

- Outplacement entitlements of employees include Priority Placement Program (PPP) registration that requires the losing activities to fund the Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves outside the commuting area
- Unemployment compensation and lump sum payment of annual leave must be paid to separated employees

When a RIF is anticipated, the Civilian Personnel Flight (CPF) can avoid or lessen the impact, and forestall the additional administrative workload for their office that is associated with RIF by reassigning the surplus employees to vacancies that are available or anticipated in the future. This will result in quicker and less disruptive placements. Please call DSN 665-3045 ext 4392 if you have any questions regarding RIF avoidance.



## Frequently Asked Questions/Answers about RIF

There are many questions that occur in the RIF process. Below are some common questions and answers concerning various RIF areas.

- a. Question: Should union representatives accompany management officials and personnel specialists when RIF notices are delivered?

Answer: It depends on your local situation. Your "Impact and Implementation" ("I and I") bargaining and/or union contract may require it. Unless these conditions exist, it is not mandatory that union representatives be present when notices are delivered.

- b. Question: What happens if an employee refuses to acknowledge receipt of the RIF notice?



Answer: Employees need to be informed. Acknowledging receipt of the notice does not indicate acceptance of the action or of the offer. If an employee refuses to acknowledge receipt of the notice, the officials delivering the notice should annotate the CPF copy of the notice with the following:

"Notice delivered to (Employee Name) on (Date); employee refused to acknowledge receipt of notice."

- c. Question: Can Air Reserve Technician (ART) positions be offered to employees who are not currently in ART positions?

Answer: It depends. An ART position may be offered to a non-ART employee only if employee is eligible to become a member of the Air Force Reserve. If employee is eligible to become a member of the AF Reserve, but does not want to join, employee may decline the ART position without the usual penalties associated with declining a valid offer. An employee who is already an ART and is offered another ART position in RIF, but declines offer is subject to the penalties accompanying declining a valid offer. Additionally, the offer of a non-ART position would be a valid offer for an ART employee.

- d. Question: An employee was given a notice of RIF separation. The employee expressed interest in Discontinued Service Retirement (DSR). Before the employee applied for DSR, he/she was given a "better offer" of a change to lower grade to a position one grade lower than the one currently held. May the employee still take discontinued service retirement?

Answer: No. An employee may not take DSR if he/she has been offered a position that is within two grades of his/her permanent grade. If the employee had applied for DSR while under notice of separation, he/she could have retired. Employees should be advised of information concerning DSR and other types of retirement early in the RIF/TOF process.

- e. Question: Many positions that are offered as RIF placements have physical and/or security clearance requirements that exceed those of employees to be placed into the positions. Can these positions be offered as RIF placements? When should physical examinations/security clearance requests be initiated?

Answer: The physical/security clearance requirements of a position do not prevent that position being used for RIF placement. Ideally, physical examinations should be accomplished before offers are made; however, there is usually not enough time to do this. Physical examinations should be completed as soon as possible during the notice period. If the employee does not meet the physical requirements of the position, another offer must be made. If the offer is a lower grade than the original one, or there is no other offer, a new 60-day notice period must begin.

Security clearances would be initiated as soon as possible. In some cases, a waiver may be accomplished to allow the employee to be placed in the new position pending granting of the clearance. Exceptionally long waiting periods for completion of security clearance may be considered in determining "undue interruption." (Remember that an employee whose clearance has been previously withdrawn is not qualified for any position which requires a clearance; consequently the position is not a valid RIF offer.)

- f. Question: An employee at Base A was given a RIF offer of change to lower grade. The employee registered in the Priority Placement Program (PPP), received and accepted an offer at Base B at his/her original grade. After a house-hunting trip to Base B, the employee declined the PPP offer. What happens at Base A?

Answer: The employee faces separation. When the employee accepted the offer, he/she, in effect, declined the change to lower grade at Base A. Usually, the declination of a valid offer results in separation. It is a good idea to have the employee sign a letter of agreement stating if he/she accepts the Base B offer. By accepting the offer, he/she declines the Base A offer of change to lower grade. If positions are available at Base A for which the employee qualifies, he/she may be offered a position; however, the employee is not entitled to the original offer if the position subsequently becomes the best offer and is accepted by another employee.

- g. Question: How are employees on injury compensation treated in RIF?

Answer: Employees that are on injury compensation that are still on your rolls must be treated as any other employee. That is, they are listed on the retention register and the appropriate placement actions taken.

Employees on injury compensation that are off the rolls are not listed on retention registers and are not considered in making placement offers.

- h. Question: What is the "cut off" date for appraisals used in determining adjusted Service Computation Dates (SCDs) for RIF? How are these dates determined?

Answer: To ensure accurate RIF placement determinations, all retention factors must be available long before notices are given and the effective date of the RIF. Since performance appraisals impact RIF SCDs, a date must be established as the "bottom line" or cut off date for consideration of appraisals in the RIF SCDs. The cut off date should be determined and documented by the CPF during pre-RIF planning.

This does not mean supervisors stop appraising employees' performance. Example: The effective date of the RIF is 1 October 03. Notices will be given during the week of 23 July 03. The actual determination of placements will be accomplished beginning 1 June 03. Retention registers will be run on 15 May 03 (with an "as of date" of 1 October 03). Therefore, the appraisal cut off date should be 1 May 2003. Any appraisal made after the date will not be used in RIF SCD determinations for that RIF.

The three most recent appraisals rendered within the preceding four-year period will be used to determine the employee's RIF SCD. Ensure the employee's Modern DCPDS files include projected appraisal information, which is not included in the RIF SCD determination. Remember retention registers should be compiled as of the effective date of the RIF.

- i. Question: How are targeted positions treated? Are placement offers made at the targeted grade or at the grade currently held by the employee in the position?

Answer: This answer applies to targeted positions only; it does not apply to positions in formalized training programs. Employees appear on the retention register at the grade they currently and permanently occupy. Example: Employee A's permanent position is Supply Clerk, GS-5, target GS-7. Employee A appears on the Supply Clerk, GS-5, retention register. A vacancy for the Supply Clerk GS-7 target grade is not entered on the GS-7 retention register because there is no vacancy; the position is encumbered by Employee A.

Employee A may be displaced by an employee with higher retention standing who can bump/retreat at the GS-5 level. Employees who cannot bump/retreat at the GS-5 level (because GS-5 is not within the range of that employee's three grade levels) cannot displace Employee A. Example: Employee A is a Supply Clerk, GS-5, target GS-7, and is in subgroup 1B, RIF SCD: 76-09-16. Employee B is a Supply Management Specialist, GS-2001-12, 1A, RIF SCD: 66-08-10, and held the position of Supply Clerk, GS-5. Employee C is a Supply Management Specialist, GS-2001-09, 1A, RIF SCD: 68-07-04, and has also held the position of Supply Clerk, GS-5. Employee B may not retreat to Employee A's position, as it is beyond the three grade-level limit of bump/retreat. Employee C may retreat to Employee A's position, as it is within the three grade-level limit. Employee C would be offered the position as a GS-5. If the position were vacant, it could be offered to Employee B as a GS-7.

Targeted positions may be offered to employees who are not on targeted positions. Example: Employee D is a Personnel Clerk, GS-4, 1AD, RIF SCD 36-05-31; Employee E is a Personnel Clerk, GS-4, 1AD, RIF SCD 36-06-01. The best offers are two vacant positions; a Personnel Clerk, GS-4, target GS-5 and a Personnel Clerk GS-4, no target grade. Technically, either employee could be offered the sub-target position since the target level of a position is not considered in making RIF offers. In this example, we would recommend that you offer the sub-targeted position to Employee D as he/she has higher retention standing than Employee E. It is always defensible to use retention standing as a basis for RIF decisions.

NOTE: When a target position is offered as a RIF placement, the employee is not required to compete for promotion to the target grade; however, if targeted positions are used in pre-RIF placement, the employee will be required to compete for promotion to the target grade.

- j. Question: Usually, the notice period is 60 days. Although some bases have a longer notice requirement (e.g., 90 or 120 day) as part of their union agreement. An employee may request and receive annual leave or LWOP to extend the total notice period (reference 5 C.F.R. for exceptions to the regular order of release). What happens if the employee's retention standing changes in the extended notice period (beyond the 60-day notice and the effective date of the RIF)?

Answer: The employee's retention standing remains fixed as of effective date of the RIF. Example: The effective date of the RIF is 31 March 2003; the employee requests annual leave until 26 April 2003 to extend the notice period. On 15 April 2003, the employee's status changes from career-conditional to career. The employee's retention standing does not change, and the RIF offer remains as it was.

NOTE: When using an exception to the regular order of release, if an employee is retained for more than 30 days under the exception, all other employees with higher standing must be notified of the retention and the retention register must be annotated by the retained employee's name with the reason for the exception and the date when the retention ends (reference 5 C.F.R. 351.608(d)(1) and (d)(2)).

- k. Question: What is the required notice period?

Answer: OPM and Air Force requires a 60-day notice. However, some local union agreements require longer notice periods (e.g. 90 or 120 days). Typically, you would count about 65 days for a notice period, to allow extra time for unforeseen difficulties. Employees may request annual leave or LWOP to provide them with an extended notice period (see 5 C.F.R. for exceptions to the regular order of release). In determining the notice period, the day of delivery and the effective date may not be counted. The effective date may not be on a weekend or holiday. The notice period begins when the employee receives the notice.

- l. Question: There are rare instances where employees' retention standing is tied (i.e., the same tenure group and adjusted SCD). How are these ties broken?

Answer: There is no regulatory guidance on this issue; it is left to the discretion of the activity and should be determined in pre-RIF planning. Normally, the base uses the "random" tie-breaker in AutoRIF to break ties. However, some bases use other factors, such as, length of time in position, length of time in occupational series, length of time in organization. The element to be used in breaking ties should be determined and documented before placement determinations are made. The same element should be applied to all ties.

- m. Question: When may employees be registered in the (PPP)?

Answer: There are some limitations stated in the DoD PPP manual. Within those limitations, employees may be registered when the priority for which they may be registered in PPP has been determined. This is true for voluntary registration; mandatory registration does not have to occur until the employees have received specific notices. For example: In a RIF, employees who will be priority "1" or "2" may be registered as soon as that priority has been determined. This registration may be accomplished before notices are delivered.

- n. Question: Once RIF notices are delivered, is the next step processing the RIF placements on the effective date of the RIF?

Answer: No. After the initial notices are delivered, every effort will be made to look for "better" offers. These changes in offers could be the result of employees deciding to retire, employees being placed through PPP or other vacancies, etc. "Worse" offers could also occur, if employees fail to meet physical or security requirements of the offered position.

- o. Question: What happens to employees who have a current appraisal rating of unacceptable?

Answer: If an employee has received a current annual performance rating of unacceptable but has not received a written decision of removal or demotion as of the date of the RIF, the agency uses the unacceptable rating and the two previous ratings of record to figure credit for performance and their adjusted SCD date. Note: Employees receive no additional credit for annual performance ratings below fully successful (or acceptable) i.e.,

minimally successful or unacceptable. If an employee has received a notice of removal due to unacceptable performance (and the removal will be effective before the RIF) the employee does not compete in RIF. If the employee is reassigned or demoted because of an unacceptable rating, the rating is used to credit performance and the employee competes for RIF in the competitive level of the newly assigned job.

p. Question: When can you waive qualifications in RIF?

Answer: In a RIF when both the CPF and the appropriate management official agree, qualifications may be "waived" for assignment to a vacancy. This authority may only be used when the employee is actually in a formal RIF (i.e., the employee has been released from a competitive level, and the position is within the grade limit of their RIF assignment rights). In other circumstances (such as Pre-RIF management reassignment or placement in lieu of RIF separation) an employee may be assigned to a vacant position through "modification" of qualifications.

q. Question: When can you offer a temporary position as a RIF "Offer of assignment".

Answer: You can offer a vacant temporary position that will last at least 3 months as a RIF "offer of assignment" (i.e. a position offer within the employee's three-grade or grade interval limits) only if a competing employee has no assignment right to another position, and will otherwise be separated by RIF. **Note: A veteran with a service-connected disability of 30% or more range is five-grade or grade intervals for retreat rights only not to vacancies.** When an employee accepts a temporary position as a RIF "offers of assignment" the employee retains the same status and tenure (e.g., a subgroup I B employee retains the I B status after entering on duty in the temporary position).

r. Question: Can you give an employee a temporary position as a placement offer that is below the three grades or grade interval range?

Answer: Yes, **but** you must either convert them to the temporary position, or reemploy them on the temporary position after RIF separation. In either situation the employee tenure will change to "0".

s. Question: Can we offer other positions within the command (e.g. ACC-wide, AETC-wide, etc)?

Answer: Yes, vacant positions in different competitive areas within the same commuting area and different local commuting areas may be made as "alternative offers" in lieu of an offer of assignment by RIF. In these situations the employee's notice will contain their RIF assignment right (either an offer of a position or separation) and the alternative offer of a vacancy in the different competitive area.

t. Question: Do employees in the excepted service have RIF assignment rights?

Answer: Employees in the excepted service do not have assignment rights to other competitive levels (i.e., round 2 competition) under either OPM or AF regulation, however assignment rights may be extended to excepted service employees locally by either command or activity policy.

u. Question: If an employee has assignment rights to a position that would require displacement of another employee (bumping or retreat rights) can he/she be put on a lower graded vacancy instead?

Answer: No. When there is more than one available position that would satisfy an employee's assignment right, the employee must be offered the position with the highest representative rate. However, when two positions exist at the same representative rate (one is vacant and the other occupied) we must use the vacant position and may not displace another employee.



## How are employees who are called up to the Reserves or National Guard Duty Handle in RIF?

Reprint from previous Personnel Insights dated 15 Dec 02.

Any Air Force employee who performs duty with a uniformed service (including active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training), whether voluntary or involuntary, is entitled to be restored to the position he or she would have attained had the employee not entered the uniformed service.

Uniformed service means the Armed Forces; the Army and Air National Guard when engaged in active duty for training, inactive duty training, or full-time National Guard duty; the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service; and any other category of persons designated by the President in time of war or emergency.

While on duty with the uniformed services, the Air Force carries the employee on leave without pay (LWOP-US) unless the employee requests separation. A separation under these circumstances does not affect restoration rights.

### **Reduction-in-Force (RIF) Protections while on LWOP-US:**

An employee may not be demoted or separated (other than military separation) while on active duty. RIF is not considered "for cause" in this situation. An employee on LWOP-US is not a "competing employee" in RIFs that impact his position or competitive area while they are gone. If the employee's position is abolished during such absence, they are not listed on the retention register (reference 5 CFR 351.404) and the agency must reassign the employee to another position of like status, and pay.

### **Reduction-in-Force (RIF) Protections upon Return to Duty/Reemployment:**

Upon reemployment, an employee may not be discharged, except for cause. Again, RIF is not considered "for cause" in this situation.

- If the period of uniformed service was more than 180 days, the employee is protected from "separation" for a period of 1 year
- If the period of uniformed service was more than 30 days, but less than 181 days, the employee is protected from "separation" for 6 months

If an employee with restoration rights is reached for release from a competitive level in RIF (during the applicable mandatory retention period) the AF is obligated to find another position for the employee rather than separate the employee. This means the RIF could be run, and the employee would compete in it, but the employee could not be separated. They may be downgraded or reassigned through. The agency may also management reassign the individual to another Air Force position in a different competitive area which meets the conditions of his/her restoration rights. Otherwise, they are given a mandatory exception in the retention order for the applicable period of time (that is remaining on their 6 month or 1 year retention period).



# Qualification Requirements for RIF Assignment

Reprint from previous Personnel Insights dated 15 Aug 02.

Determination Qualifications requirements for assignments is the most contentious part of the RIF. It is only human nature for impacted employees to believe that they qualify for all positions (or can be trained to do them) when they are facing a change to lower grade or separation in RIF. On the other hand, it is also human nature for managers and commanders to resent either having their employees displaced or their vacant positions filled by mandatory placement. As a result, the RIF unit takes a very close look at qualifications before we determine an employee is "fully qualified" for a RIF placement.

To have an assignment right in RIF an employee must be "fully qualified" for the position. This means the employees experience must exceed the standards we set for "basic eligibility" and even "best qualified" for merit promotion consideration. In RIF, the employee's past experience must provide clear evidence that they have the capacity, adaptability, and any special skills required to successfully perform the duties and responsibilities of the position without "undue interruption" to the work program. That means they must be able to perform all critical requirements of the job taking in account the pressures of deadlines, priorities and other demands of the organization without loss of quality or production to the organization. Usually if the individual cannot perform these duties within a period of 90 days the organization would be unduly interrupted.

We also consider "undue interruption" in determining qualification for vacancies. The only difference is an extension of the 90-day standard. The RIF candidate still needs to have experience in their background that shows they have the capability to perform all the critical elements of the position but for a vacancy we usually extend the amount of time they have before the organization is unduly interrupted. How long we extend it is usually determined by the criticality of the position and/or management's willingness to accept the person (and the interruption).

The undue interruption rule does not apply when placing individuals into vacancies (at their current grade or lower) through either waiver of qualifications, or when making management reassignments. Therefore, we can still get an impacted employee on to a vacant position even when they do not "fully qualify", providing management and the CPF concurs with the placement



## Alternatives to RIF

The RIF process is not totally mechanical - there are a number of proactive and creative things that the CPF and management can do that will lessen the impact of RIF. Some of these are:

### (a) USE OF ALTERNATIVE OFFERS

You may make an "alternative offer" of a vacant position in lieu of an offer of assignment by RIF. An alternative offer is a voluntary offer of a position apart from the assignment rights determined in RIF. The voluntary offer is provided along with the employee's RIF assignment right and the employee has the choice of accepting either offer.

The offer may be either a reassignment or change to lower grade. The rules of grade and pay retention apply to these “voluntary” actions since the reason for the offer is management’s decision to run a RIF.

Alternative offers may be in the same competitive area of the RIF. For example, you may offer a position with a lower representative rate than the assignment right that better fits the employee’s personal circumstances. A common use of an alternative offer is a lower-graded position, which allows the employee to remain in the same line of work, rather than a reassignment displacing a lower standing employee who works in a different program or occupation.

Alternative offers may also be made in other competitive areas within the same commuting area, and in different commuting areas. For example, an employee who is scheduled for separation in his/her competitive area could be offered a changed to lower grade or reassignment at another base within their command.

The RIF Unit will issue “Alternative Offers” at the discretion of management and the CPF not at an employee’s request. It also applies only in formal RIF placements (that is, when the employee has been released from a competitive level).

#### **(b) MANAGEMENT REASSIGNMENTS**

At its discretion, management may avoid RIF procedures (including round 1 and round 2 RIF placements) by reassigning an employee who is within reach for RIF. Providing the position to which the employee is reassigned is not another employee’s RIF assignment right. Management reassignments may be made in Pre-RIF, during Formal RIF and Post RIF. Management reassignments that are done in lieu of RIF placements are processed by the CPF not the RIF Unit.

#### **(c) RESTRUCTURING VACANT POSITIONS**

Management should be encouraged to consider restructuring positions that are not needed at the target grade for placement of other employees. This may include downgrading the position, or reclassification to another occupation.

You may assign an employee under formal RIF procedures (i.e., the employee is released from a competitive level) to a position with higher promotion potential. If this occurs (in formal RIF) after assignment the employee may be non-competitively promoted to the full performance level of the position. There is also no need to clear the PPP stopper list to process this promotion action since it is a career promotion.

A placement action outside of a formal RIF assignment right (e.g., Pre-RIF, or in lieu of RIF separation), or through modification of qualifications, to a position with greater growth potential must be made competitively in accordance with internal merit promotion procedures.

#### **(d) WAIVER OF QUALIFICATIONS IN RIF**

Management is authorized to waive OPM qualification standards (except for minimum education requirements) for assignment to a vacant position with the same or lower representative rate as their current position, if they and the CPF have determined that the employee will be able to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position. Although the position to be offered may not have a higher representative rate, it may have more promotion potential.

The provision to waive qualifications is only at the discretion of management and is not an employee entitlement. It also applies only in formal RIF placements (that is, when the employee has been released for a competitive level).

#### **(e) MODIFICATION OF QUALIFICATIONS IN PRE RIF OR IN LIEU OF RIF**

In making pre-RIF placements you may reassign the employee, or accept an offer from them to voluntarily take a change to lower grade (Note: You must be careful that it is not perceived as a management initiated action) to a position for which they do not meet OPM qualifications standards through modification of qualifications. You may also consider possible placement for employees who have no assignment rights in RIF (that is, there are no available assignments within the three-grade or grade interval range) at their same and lower grades through modification of qualifications. As with the provision for waiver of qualifications, the CPF and management must agree that the

employee will be able to perform the duties of the position. Unlike the waiver for RIF, if the position has more promotion potential than the employee's current position, the action must be made under competitive merit promotion procedures.



## How to Deliver RIF Notices

Reprint from previous Personnel Insights dated 15 August 2002.

Delivering RIF notices is not a simple task. It is also very stressful for both the person making the delivery and the employee getting the notice. However, it's a required part of the RIF process, which notifies affected employees of their RIF status and provides them with basic information about pay and benefits associated with the RIF. It is also the first time the employee received face-to-face information about the RIF and their opportunity to respond, sometimes emotionally. If the delivery goes badly, the less confidence the employee will have in the entire RIF process, and the greater the likelihood of congressional inquiries, grievances, and appeals. You need to have a plan in place before you deliver them. Here are some recommended "Dos" and Don'ts for you to follow in developing your plan. Additional guidance on RIF notices delivery is contained in OPM Restructure Handbook Module 2, Unit B, Sec 2, and Para 32.

### **"DOs"**

- Decide who will deliver the notices. Ideally, a management official (supervisor, department head, commander) should deliver them to their impacted employees, with a personnel representative on hand
- Notify union(s) when you deliver notices to employees. You will want to work closely with your labor relations expert on precisely when and how to notify the union officials
- If the notice contains a position offer, send a copy to the organization where the employee will be placed
- Deliver notices in person whenever possible. If not possible (where employees are on extended sick leave, long term training, etc.) mail the notices by registered mail with a return receipt requested
- Deliver all notices as quickly as possible (preferably all in one day). Once you start, the word will be out and it will be very stressful for their notice
- When you deliver the notice, be direct and human, conveying information in a respectful, business-like manner. Maintain eye contact with the other person
- Take time to listen attentively. Some will want to have their say, so let them talk. Listen... don't react.
- Treat employees with dignity and compassion
- Encourage each employee to carefully review the pay and benefits information provided and to contact the local POC in the CPF if they have questions
- Inform employees of next steps in the RIF process, including using outplacement, access to workspace, and the exit process
- Tell them whom they can contact if they want to review RIF records, regulations or retention registers
- Plan ahead for rumor control. Be clear what information is private and what is public. Deal with rumors openly and promptly
- Ask employee to sign copy of notice, acknowledging receipt--if employee refuses, note date of delivery
- Return all acknowledgement copies of the RIF notices to the AFPC RIF Unit

### **"DON'Ts"**

- Argue with employees, or further justify the employee's assignment or separation
- Don't try to respond to every question that is asked. Tell the employee they can set up a meeting with the POC in the CPF to get specific information about the RIF
- Don't apologize for the RIF
- Imply the decision for the RIF is not final



- Become impatient
- Imply you disagree with the RIF actions
- Blame others for the RIF decisions (e.g. decision on your assignment was made by AFPC)
- Say, "I know how you feel"; you probably don't
- Discuss the RIF placement of other individuals
- Issue RIF notices of separation during the period of 15 December to 3 January

Did You Know You Can Register on line for Career Programs?

<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/cp>

### **Services Directory**

#### **AFPC Civilian Employment Internet Addresses**

Civilian Employment Home Page: <https://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afjobs/>

Directorate of Civilian Personnel Home Page: <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc>

### **Office of Personnel Management (OPM)**

Home Page - <http://www.opm.gov>

Human Resources References - <http://www.opm.gov/references/>

USAJobs - <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>

Veterans - <http://www.opm.gov/veterans/>

VetGuide/VetsInfo Guide - <http://www.opm.gov/veterans/index.htm>

People With Disabilities - <http://www.opm.gov/disability/>

Students - <http://www.studentjobs.gov>

Reduction In Force (RIF) - <http://www.opm.gov/rif/general/rifmenu.htm>

Retraining Centers "One-Stop Centers" - <http://www.opm.gov/rif/general/onestop.htm>

### **Other Information**

Veteran's Preference Advisor - <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/veto/vetpref/vetspref.htm>

America's Job Bank - <http://www.ajb.org>

Dept of Veterans Affairs - <http://www.va.gov/>

Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) - <http://www.dfas.mil>

Employee/Member Self Service (E/MSS) system - <http://www.dfas.mil/emss/>